Boulder Nissan Leads the Charge to Solar-Powered Dealerships in Colorado

Challenge
Boulder Nissan is driving the transition to electric vehicles in Boulder County, Colorado, with high-volume sales of Nissan Leafs. The dealership wanted to accelerate its sustainability efforts by improving its energy efficiency efforts and taking the business solar.

SunPower’s Solution
Working with the team at Independent Power Systems (IPS), Boulder Nissan made the strategic decision to retrofit its lighting with LEDs, and installed a 50.25 kW, high-efficiency SunPower® system on the roof of its dealership to power its operations.

Customer Benefit
While the management team at Boulder Nissan had a strong environmental commitment to going solar, the fiscal benefits were hard to miss. The combined energy efficiency + solar project will save the dealership a projected $384,000 over 25 years.

Quick Facts
- 50.25 kW Total System Size
- Rooftop Installation Type
- $134,157 Approximate 10-Year Savings from Solar Alone
- $384,000 Projected 25-Year Savings from Solar and LED Retrofit
- 67% Approximate Electricity Offset (LED + Solar Combined)
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Ted Christiano
General Manager
Boulder Nissan

Leading by Clean-Powered Example

In the push to move the world to cleaner power, there are leaders and there are followers. Boulder Nissan, a top dealer of Nissan Leafs in Colorado, has distinguished itself in the leader camp.

Recognizing the synergy between electric vehicles and solar, the dealership worked with the City of Boulder and other partners to launch an innovative EV + solar group-purchasing program in 2015 that proved wildly successful, selling 248 EVs in just four months.

Then in the fall of 2016, the dealership decided to up the ante and rethink the entire facility’s energy footprint. Working with the team at IPS, Ted Christiano, GM of Boulder Nissan, quickly realized the potential of combining LED lighting retrofits and a rooftop solar system from SunPower to save the Boulder community hundreds of thousands of pounds in carbon emissions.

The dealership’s LED lighting project cut energy use nearly in half. Then the team installed a high-efficiency solar system on the roof of the facility, consisting of 150 SunPower solar panels, reducing energy use another 20%. Together, the solar + LED project is expected to offset Boulder Nissan’s electricity use by 67 percent, saving the company an estimated $384,000 over the next 25 years.

Customers have begun to take notice. In this progressive, environmentally minded community, Christiano says, people seem to appreciate an auto dealer who has invested so thoughtfully in energy efficiency and who powers most of its operations with solar.
“IPS followed through on exactly what they said they would do, and did the project without being disruptive to our business in any way. We look forward to working with them on our new location.”

Ted Christiano
General Manager
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“Customers are choosing us over the competitors because we are demonstrating our concern for the community and environment by going solar,” notes Ted Christiano, General Manager of Boulder Nissan. “Our solar project is actually gaining us customers.”

Driving a Statewide Solar Movement

Other auto dealers may soon join Boulder Nissan through the Colorado Solar Power Project 2020. SunPower and IPS, an Allied member of the Colorado Automobile Dealers Association, are working to encourage more dealerships to go solar.

Dealerships have untapped energy savings that could help their bottom line by the equivalent of two or three more vehicles sold per month, estimates Ryan Ferrero, Chairman of IPS, who is the Project Director of the Colorado Solar Power Project. Ferrero notes that while tax incentives provide dealerships with an extra incentive to add solar, energy efficiency and solar projects typically pay for themselves within a few years, even without incentives.